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C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 001381

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/CM; ALSO FOR DRL

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SUBJECT: FERNANDO CHUI "ELECTED" SECOND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF  
MACAU

REF: (A) HONG KONG 1282 (B) HONG KONG 1078 (C) HONG  
KONG 983 (D) 08 HONG KONG 2094

Classified By: Deputy Principal Officer Christopher Marut for reasons 1  
.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) While he netted four fewer votes than nominations, former Macau Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Fernando Chui Sai-on's 282 votes (out of 297 cast) clinched the final stage of his unopposed "election" as the third-term Chief Executive of Macau July 26. Chui is expected to be approved by Beijing in the near future (in accordance with Macau Basic Law Article 47, the Chief Executive (CE) is "selected by election" but "appointed by the Central People's Government.") He will take office December 20. Fourteen electors cast blank ballots in what the media took as a protest against the single-candidate race, while democratic-leaning (and prone-to-grandstanding) legislator Jose Pereira Coutinho openly refused to hand in his ballot in protest.

¶2. (C) As reported ref B, our contacts told us some part of Beijing's Macau policy apparatus harbored doubts about Chui as CE. If Prosecutor General Ho Chio-meng, who took down former Secretary for Transport and Public Works Ao Man-long in Macau's largest-ever corruption case, retains his post under Chui, it would be seen by some as Beijing laying down a marker on corruption issues. The appointment of one of Macau's younger generation to Chui's cabinet (Executive Councilor and National People's Congress deputy Lionel Leong Vai-tac has been mentioned to us in past) might also suggest Beijing wants to be ready to replace Chui after one term if necessary.

¶3. (C) Chui's popularity among Macau's general public also appears tepid at best. More than 30,000 residents joined an online "election" poll (reportedly structured to accept only one vote per IP address). Over 24,000 supported Prosecutor General Ho Chio-meng, the favorite of those seeking an alternative candidate to Chui. Secretary for Economy and Finance Francis Tam Pak-yuen, the other major contender once tipped to run against Chui who ultimately declined to join the race, netted 2,360. Chui took only 1,552 votes, placing fourth overall. Outside the anonymity of cyberspace, however, few Macau people were willing to protest the election openly. An election day rally against "small-circle elections" convened by proto-democratic party the New Macau Association reportedly drew only around 20 participants.

¶4. (C) September's more competitive Legislative Assembly elections may prove to be a referendum on Macau's democratic development (unlike Hong Kong's, Macau's Basic Law does not promise eventual universal suffrage.) Three of the sixteen electoral slates -- the New Macau Association's, Coutinho's, and Agnes Lam's Civic Power -- have publicly called for universal suffrage elections for Chief Executive not later than 2019, and a transition to a fully directly-elected Legislative Assembly starting in 2013.

